

Baby, You're a Firework by GallifreyGod

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Summary:

While Jim feels down on his luck, Joyce decides to try to get his spirits up by taking him to see 4th of July fireworks. But maybe the stops along the way are what count the most.

Baby, You're a Firework

Author's Note:

This is part nine of the Stories From Summer series :)

For Joyce Byers and her clan of excited kids; plus one tired Police Chief, Fourth of July had gone off without a hitch. Honestly, the mother didn't know how she had possibly managed to take hold of one of the busiest holidays with six kids, three teens, and Hopper, but she pulled it off pretty damn well.

Every year, one of the party member's parents decided to host for their children's Fourth of July party... this year Joyce got lucky and ended up with *all* of the kids. It wasn't a problem *really*, but she did feel overwhelmed with Steve, Nancy, Jane and Max as new additions. Instead of just the four boys, this year it was a fourth of the Hawkins population she had under her wing.

Joyce was extra thankful this year because Hopper had offered to help host the party at his old trailer. She accepted the offer before the words were done leaving his lips and sealed it with a grateful kiss. There was a bathroom, a lake, and plenty more room than what she could offer.

The entire day really couldn't have gone better. The kids spent almost the entire time swimming in the lake, playing games, or just running around screaming. Truthfully, it had warmed Joyce's heart to see everybody she loved having the times of their lives. No tears, no monsters, just pure happiness surrounding everybody.

By the time ten at night rolled around, all of the hot dogs and hamburgers had been eaten, everybody had tan-lines and sunburn, and the nine kids were back at the dock awaiting the fireworks.

"Are you sure we shouldn't take them to the park? The whole town is there to watch the fireworks." Hop asked as he lit a cigarette and passed it to Joyce. They had decided to stay back on the trailer porch, cuddled up in a blanket while everybody was down by the lake.

"No, Will said that they were sure they could see the fireworks from here." Joyce smiled as she curled her head closer into the crook of his neck. "Anyways, I'm not sure we could pry them away from the water." she laughed.

The cracking boom in the sky startled Joyce before she saw the red and yellow sparks decorating the sky. Without a word being exchanged, Hopper tightened his grip around her body, attempting to relax her from the noise.

"Hop," Joyce whispered under the loud crack of another firework.

"Yeah, Joy?" he replied, pressing a small kiss to her temple.

"Do you remember the first time we watched fireworks together?" she grinned as she thought back to one of her happiest memories of the two of them.

Jim poked his tongue at his cheek, trying to bite back a smile. "Course I do. July 4th, 1956. And we weren't really watching them as much as we were laughing through them."

July 4th, 1956

Jim looked up from his book as he heard a familiar pattern of footsteps rushing up the stairs. He could always tell it was his best friend from the sound of her feet skipping every other step. Before he could even blink, fifteen-year-old Joyce Horowitz burst into his room with a smile plastered on her face. "Jimbo! Get up!" she shouted excitedly, brushing the excess hair from her pony-tail out of her face.

"You really don't know how to knock, do you?" Hop groaned, closing his book and sitting up on his bed to face her. Ever since they were 5 years old, her manners lacked. At least when she was around him they did. Maybe that was just one of the perks of a comfortable friendship... or maybe she just didn't care.

"Nope!" Joyce replied as she plopped down on the end of his bed. "Why didn't you show up at the park? The whole town is down there

getting ready for the firework show and we're gonna miss it," she complained as she looked around his bedroom, staring at his rock band posters.

"Jo, you know I can't leave. Mom is getting worse and.." Jim couldn't even think of finishing that sentence, but Joyce knew where he was going. Hopper's mother had fallen ill around Christmas with breast cancer and as she was nearing the end of her expectancy, he had begun feeling guilty whenever he left her side.

"Hop, your dad said he wants you to go watch the show with me. He's downstairs right now with your mom and she's eating dinner. If anything, that's a good sign. You know she's gonna want you to go and enjoy yourself, so come with me... please." In all honesty, Joyce was more worried about Hop than she was worried about his Mom. Her best friend had barely left the house since school ended and he seemed to be growing depressed. Ever since they were kids he had been just as fun-loving as she was, but that persona was quickly disappearing.

Jim hesitated for a few moments, trying to decide whether to go with his heart or his head. Before he could answer, Joyce jumped up and pulled on his arm. "Please Jimmy, *pleeeeeeeaaaassee!*"

"Alright! Just don't do that!" he chuckled lightly, finally pulling himself out of bed to follow her out of his room, and of course, skipping every step on the staircase just like she did. As they ran through the house and out the front door, Hopper's eyes widened as he saw Mr. Horowitz' Oldsmobile parked in his driveway. "You *drove* here? You're only 15, Joyce!"

"Yeah, are you gonna stand there all night stating facts or are you gonna get your ass in the shotgun?" she laughed, jumping in through the open window and shoving the key in the ignition. "*Goodness gracious, great balls of fire!*" Joyce sang along with the radio as she turned up the volume and sped away.

After a five-minute drive full of Joyce's glorious lipsyncing, she and Hopper pulled into the parking lot of the Hawkins High School football field.

"What are we doing here, Joyce? I thought we were going to the park." Hop questioned as they stepped out of the car. She dragged him out of the house for a firework show, not a short game with the pigskin.

"Nah, we're just stopping here for a minute," she replied, trailing towards the fence of the field. "Help me up over the fence, I wanna show you something." With a hesitant sigh, Jim lifted the smaller teen up and hoisted her over the metal gate. If she was gonna put him through this, she better have at least one bottle of liquor.

"Do you remember what happened on this field, Hop?" Joyce walked backward, keeping her eyes set on him as she smiled. "You scored your very first touchdown on this field. I remember it like it was yesterday. Hawkins J.V. vs. Loch Nora, we were so close but we were still five points away and Loch hadn't lost a game all season."

Jim gave her a bashful smile, biting the inside of his cheek as he thought back to that day.

"With just a few seconds left it seemed like all hope was lost but there comes Jimmy Hopper, barreling down the field. Coach Stevens didn't think you could do it but you ran in like a knight in shining armor with that football in your hands and you scored in the last second. Your first touchdown, Hop! Right here. Every single soul on the bleachers nearly crapped their pants and the whole team had you on top of their shoulders!"

Right as Joyce finished her lecture, pink and green lights lit up the sky over top of them; only adding more dramatics to her story. "See! Even the sky is clapping for you!" she shouted, almost doubling over laughing as Jim finally broke out into a full-fledged smile.

"What are you doing this for, Joycie?" he grinned, putting his hands in his jacket pockets as he walked closer to her.

"You're lost, Hop. I'm gonna help you find yourself by reminding you of what made you who you are." Joyce smiled softly, grabbing his arm and running back to the car as golden fireworks cracked over them. Climbing back over the fence and walking back to the parking lot, Joyce started the car and began driving towards the Hawkins

Elementary school.

Pulling into the round-about drop-off, Joyce parked the car and turned towards Hopper. "Remember what happened here?" she smiled, putting a cigarette between her lips and lighting it up.

"Enlighten me."

"Kindergarten, Mrs. Tanner's class. Ten years ago I marched in with my Mary Jane's and plaid stockings. I looked around the room and I found you sitting in the back of the class while you were coloring." Joyce raised her eyebrows, hoping he was following her story.

"You walked up to me, poked me in the shoulder and said *'I'm Joyce and you're my new friend, okay?'* and I was fine with that." Hop belted out a laugh as he took the cigarette from her.

"You had no choice, from that moment on you were stuck with me." she smiled along with him, hoping her point was starting to break through to him. It was the first time she had seen Hop laugh within months and it was like music to her ears. Watching her best friend wither away had almost brought her down with him.

"I guess it isn't so bad." he started. "I mean, you and Benny are the only real friends who have stuck with me this far. I'm really thankful for that, Joy." the mood in the car went from hilarious to deep within a second. Joyce could see in the lines of his smile that he really meant it. Breaking the moment almost instantly, a red white and blue firework lit up the sky above them, the boom filling up the gaps of silence.

Next was the hospital. Driving past Hawkins Memorial, Joyce looked at him and felt a smile creeping on to her face. "Here is where it all started. For *10 years* I've listened to your mother continuously tell the story of your birthday."

"*And Jimmy, don't get me started on Jimmy. 18 hours in labor with him just to have him come out lookin' like his father!*" The two of them recited in unison, mocking Joanne Hopper's favorite line of the century. While they both nearly fell over from each other's impression, three more bright and booming fireworks rained over the

sky.

The more they drove and the more memories they were reminded of, the louder and more intense the fireworks became. As if they were matching each of Jim's renewing smiles, the firecrackers sounded as if they were cheering him on.

They drove around town for who knows how long, telling the stories of everything that shaped Jim Hopper into who he was. From his first broken arm at the skate park to the first time he ever kicked Lonnie Byers ass behind Bradley's Big Buy. Joyce's personal favorite was the lake that Jim had caught his first Largemouth Bass in. He and his dad entered a Father-Son competition and he had almost won with a 26-inch fish... until the damn thing flopped off the line and pulled him into the lake with it. Joyce couldn't stop laughing whenever that story came to mind. By the end of the night, they both had stomach aches from the laughter and the sky had filled with colorful fireworks with each story told.

Finally finishing their route, Joyce pulled into the busy park. Hundreds of people stood around in the dark as the lights danced in the sky, earning *oohs* and *ahhs* from handfuls of children watching.

Before she reached to open the car door, Hop's hand reached out and touched her shoulder. "Joyce." he looked at her intently, searching in her eyes for the right words to say.

"Yeah, Hop?" she whispered, hearing her heartbeat thudding in her ears.

Just as the firework's grand finale began, Jim gently pressed his lips to hers. As if all the sounds of cracking booms disappeared, Joyce could only hear pure silence as she leaned into his kiss.

Pulling away breathlessly, the two of them looked at one another with a mixed expression of shock and happiness.

"Thank you, for everything."

Still curled up with Joyce, watching the kids play in the lake as the fireworks began to end, Hopper looked down and smiled at her. Leaning over, he gently placed a chaste kiss on her forehead.

"You reminded me of who I was that night and you helped pull me out of an abyss I had been stuck in. Thank you, for everything."

Author's Note:

duffer brothers own the characters blah blah blah